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THE MASTER'S HOME CALL.

BRIEF MEMORIALS OF
ALICE FRANCES BICKERSTETH
BY HER FATHER.

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THE

MASTER'S HOME-CALL;

OR,

Brief Memorials of Alice Frances Bickersteth.

BY HER FATHER,

THE REV. E. H. BICKERSTETH, M.A.

Vicar of Christ Church, Hampstead, and Chaplain to the Bishop of Ripon.

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

"As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him."

Third Edition.

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INTRODUCTION.

To the Friends and Companions in Age of my Child.

My dear young Friends,

IT was for your sakes especially, as I have stated in the following Sermon, that I ventured, though with much trembling, to speak of my child to my flock. Indeed those, who do not and cannot know all the tender sympathies which the love of my people has woven betwixt our home-sorrow and themselves during the last few months, might easily blame me for having said so much.

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But true deep Christian love is its own apology, and makes that natural to the household of faith, which must seem strange to those who are themselves strangers to the intimate kinship that binds together the whole family in heaven and earth.

But having said what I have said of my child from the pulpit, and having been urged by many members of my congregation whose wishes have a sacred compulsion for me at this time to print my Sermon, I think that you and they will like to be put in possession of a few additional facts, which shed light upon her holy peace when the Master came and called for her, and of a few little poems written by her during the last two years, of which we are continually asked to allow copies to be made. It has at least been a soothing and delightful occupation to myself in the quiet rest which our Heavenly Father has provided for us here on the banks of the Clyde through the thoughtful brotherly kind-

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ness of a friend, to group together a few more of her spoken and written thoughts. You will find them in the Postscript appended to the Sermon.

There are two ways of dealing with sorrow. You may shrink with a tender sensitiveness from every thing that expressly and openly recalls the name which is graven on your very heart; or you may welcome and cherish any memorial that reminds you of the beloved form, and of the life that is now doubly hidden with Christ in God. We cannot altogether overcome the first instinct of seclusion with our grief and with our God; and this is well; for it is in such solitude we hold secret fellowship with Him, "With whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord." And yet a pastorate of nearly twenty-five years has deeply convinced me that they, who in sorrow pass and repass continually from the communion of saints to communion with God, from the

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Holy place to the Most Holy, are those into whose hearts the promised Comforter pours the softest and most healing balm. How can it be otherwise, when all the disciples of Jesus are not only one with Him, their crucified and risen Lord, but one also with all the members in heaven and earth of His mystical body the Church?

If, therefore, in the following Sermon and postscript I ask you to watch with me for a little while by the patient couch, or to stand by the scarcely sealed grave of your friend and companion in years, it is I humbly hope from the same feeling that prompted the apostle to write to the sympathizing Christians at Corinth, "And whether we be afflicted it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; or whether we be comforted it is for your consolation and salvation."

That the Lord may grant us and you to be

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followers of all those, who by faith and patience inherit the exceeding great and precious promises of His Gospel, is the prayer of your attached friend and pastor,

EDWARD HENRY BICKERSTETH.

FAIRLIEBURNE, FAIRLIE ON THE CLYDE,
9th October, 1872.

NOTE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

Since my child, to whom these pages chiefly refer, entered into rest, the Good Shepherd has come again to my home and taken her infant sister to His heavenly fold. I have ventured in the lines, added pp. 81—86, to allude to their meeting in His presence.

CHRIST CHURCH VICARAGE, HAMPSTEAD,
29th November, 1871.

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SERMON.

(*Preached in Christ Church, Hampstead, on September* 29, 1872.)

JOHN xi. 28.

"*The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him.*"

Ὁ διδάσκαλος πάρεστι, καὶ φωνεῖ σε. Ἐκείνη ὡς ἤκουσεν, ἐγείρεται ταχὺ, καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτόν.

THE Gospel narrative in which these words occur, while most precious to us at all times, seems peculiarly to belong to us in hours of suffering and bereavement. It is the mourner's resort to which we almost instinctively repair, when God lays His chas-

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tening Hand upon us in love. Nor can we marvel at this, for it tells of the Presence of Him who is the Man of Sorrows, of the Brother who is born for adversity, of our merciful High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, in the house of mourning, a house which sickness had for some days solemnized, and over which the shadow of death was then resting.

1. Even the thoughts which lie nearest the surface in this wondrous narrative of human sorrow and Divine love are full of consolation.

The very picture of the home at Bethany, that quiet village lying over the ridge of Olivet, the house of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, to which Jesus so often retired from the tumult of the city, strikes a chord of domestic sympathy in our hearts.

And then the simple trustful message sent, *Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick*, who can exhaust the consolation of these

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words? How they translate into history the assurance—Whom the Lord loveth, He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

Nor did the Lord respond to the message for a while. He abode two days still in the same place where He was, and His delay permitted the death and even the burial of His beloved friend. The mourner's heart clings to the fact that infinite Love, even when incarnate on the earth, did not shield the beloved one from dying. We spell out with tears the patience of Jesus.

Yet when His time was come, no thought of personal danger for a moment deterred Him. Love thinks nothing impossible, and, like faith, overcomes the world.

And when Martha met Him, with the instinctive irrepressible words, *Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*, how it gives utterance to questionings which almost of necessity suggest them-

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selves when sorrow befalls us! Why was this, when it needed such a narrow divergence of Providence to alter every thing? A hand-breadth more to the right or to the left had saved the one we love, only the avoidance of this risk, only the difference of a few hours, only a change of weather, only perhaps the warning voice of an absent friend. It might not be. The beloved one dies.

And we see in Lazarus how well it was that the grief actually fell, in order that the victory over death might actually be achieved. We see it in his case, and Faith answers through her tears, "So it shall be in ours."

And how often do the answering words of Jesus, answering that imperfect faith of Martha, which felt after the Hand of omnipotent love, *Thy brother shall rise again*, echo in our hearts. The calm unfaltering affirmation of Eternal Truth abides with us, whether we regard the nearer resurrection of

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Lazarus, or the more remote meaning of the words to which alone Martha attained. And these words only introduce those which are the climax of the heavenly consolation of this narrative: *I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.* O blessed assurance! as it falls upon our ears we gaze on the Speaker till the Supreme Deity of the Prince of Life and the everlasting triumph which yet awaits the Captain of our Salvation break upon our view. Blessed assurance! and never more blessed than when it meets us with the note of accomplished victory as we carry the form of the departed saint to its last earthly resting-place!

But Martha, as you know, failed to grasp all the consolation these words could bear; she could only cling to her Personal Lord. *Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.* Is it not often so with us?

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The future seems dim and clouded, the promises seem very far off; but Jesus is near, a very present help in trouble, and to Him we cling, like the limpet to the rock, the closer for the dashing waves of sorrow.

Our text will recall us to the meeting of our Lord and Mary near the cave which was the sepulchre of her brother; and I only linger for a moment on the record, *Jesus wept.* I know not how it is with you, brethren, but I have known times when the whole Gospel seemed to me wrapt up and condensed in those words, *Jesus wept.* Emmanuel shedding tears of grief! Oh, come what will or what may, let what mysteries soever shroud God's dealings with us, we can rest on the proven human sympathy and tenderness of Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person, and yet who mingled His tears with ours.

I must not dwell on the final scene when

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the stone was rolled away from the cave and the Lord of Life stood face to face with the trophy of apparently triumphant death. Do you not often, when you are reverently threading your way through a country churchyard, or a city's peopled cemetery, recall the prayer of Jesus, *Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me*, and the calm summons that followed, *Lazarus, come forth;* and the awful obedience of the sheeted dead—*he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave-clothes.*

Can you not imagine how it scattered dismay through the ranks of the powers of darkness, as it was whispered among them, "Messiah spake, and it was done: not even corruption barred His mandate; dissolution had set in, but the dead awoke"? And do not your thoughts travel on to the time when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice?

Scripture is silent on the holy joy that

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must have filled the home at Bethany that day; the delight of Martha and Mary, the calm wonder of Lazarus recovered from actual death, which may have seemed to him only as a trance; the exultation of the apostles, and, may we not add, the sympathy of gladness in the breast of Jesus, who not only is afflicted in the affliction of His people, but rejoices in their joy? It was a foretaste of the resurrection morning, of the final Easter of the Church.

Such are the simplest facts of this narrative; and who that ponders them can marvel that the sick and the suffering and the mourners clasp this incident to their heart, as the very balm of present anguish and the pledge of eternal consolation?

2. But, beneath and beyond these more apparent truths, it seems to me that many verses and clauses of this chapter are fraught with hidden and heavenly meaning.

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Doubtless the lessons we gather from the simple historic verity of the narrative are the most precious of all. They are the golden harvest-sheaves; they are the ripe clusters of the vine. But we must not neglect to pick up the scattered ears that remain, or to pluck the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. And more especially in the home of sorrow are we called to bend a lowly and reverential ear to catch the whispers of God's voice.

I cannot but think that our Lord leads us to expect such secret teachings of His Spirit here, and Himself strikes the key-note when He says,—

This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. The words, "This sickness is not unto death," were not fulfilled in their first and most obvious meaning, for Lazarus died; but Death had only won a transient triumph, that he might receive a

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more crushing defeat, the earnest of his eternal overthrow. And we echo the thought even in the darkened home, no sickness of the believer, no mortal sickness even, is unto death, as though Death had gained his victim for ever; but only for the more lustrous and everlasting glory of the Son of God. The same truth lies hidden in the words, *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.* To the eye of Jesus death is sleep, and when His people die it is but falling asleep in Him; a truth caught by the deep instinct of the Church, who, since our Lord's resurrection, has fondly called the burying-place where she lays her holy dead to rest, a cemetery (*κοιμητήριον*) or sleeping-home.

Then, turning for a moment from the words of Jesus to those of S. Thomas, who, with the clinging love and profound melancholy that marked his character, replied, *Let us also go that we may die with Him*, surely

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we decipher how danger for Jesus's sake, and even death with Jesus, is the path to glory and everlasting life.

Nor do I think that we have at all exhausted the meaning of that great central saying (vv. 25, 26), "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die," if we limit the words to the undying spiritual life of the individual believer here and hereafter; but I believe it is a direct anticipation of the after-teaching of the Holy Spirit. "Sorrow not for them which are asleep, even as others which have no hope . . for them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. . . The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 13—17).

We have already touched on the words

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Jesus wept, and the exquisite sympathy of which they assure us of His heart in our griefs; but I feel sure that Keble, in his beautiful poem which begins—

> The Son of God in doing good
> Was fain to look to heaven and sigh . . .

and which alludes to those tears—

> So o'er the grave where Lazarus slept
> He to His Father groan'd and wept—
> What saw He mournful in that grave,
> Knowing Himself so strong to save?

has given a true insight into the deeper meaning which underlies those tears—

> No eye but His might ever bear
> To gaze all down that drear abyss,
> Because none ever saw so clear
> The shore beyond of endless bliss:
> The giddy waves so restless hurl'd,
> The vex'd pulse of this feverish world,
> He views and counts with steady sight,
> Used to behold the Infinite.

They were the tears of the great Husbandman, who goes forth weeping, but shall

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doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.

Again, what a wondrous unveiling of that life of unbroken affiance and dependence on His Heavenly Father, which He, as the Son of Man, in human weakness lived, leaning as He bids us lean, and trusting as He bids us trust, we have in His utterance of victorious prayer, *Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me!*

And when He said to them, as they gazed in solemn awe on the shrouded form of Lazarus, *Loose him, and let him go,* we can hardly fail to see a type of that liberty of the glory of the children of God when, loosed from the cerements of the grave, they shall rise to the full fruition of regenerate and immortal humanity.

And so, when we read, in the words of my text, *The Master is come, and calleth for thee,* I cannot limit them to the immediate occasion. Jesus had called her before, when Martha

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first received Him into her house (Luke x. 38—42). His voice of Divine love and truthfulness and tenderness penetrated the heart of Mary. The Master came then and called: He stood at the door of her heart and knocked, and she listened to His voice, and opened the door, and welcomed Him as her Lord, and sate at His feet, and heard His word.

And now in this hour of bereavement, ere He wrought His mightiest miracle of love, He almost seems to crave that calm receptive faith which was Mary's special characteristic. He called her, and immediately she arose quickly and came to Him, and fell at His feet, her chosen place, and shared her grief with His.

Nor need I remind you of the quickly following narrative when she crushed the alabaster box of very precious ointment and poured it on the head and on the feet of Jesus; for with love's foreboding intuition she

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had kept it against the day of His burying. The near sufferings of her Lord called her to His feet, and she came with the costliest tribute she could bring. All was too mean in her eyes for her Saviour.

And surely when her course on earth was run, and the message came for her, "The Master wants thee in His Paradise of rest," it would not be hard for Mary to arise and go. I think few saints would obey the summons with more loving alacrity and holy peace.

And yet once more He will call her—when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and when He calls, *Mary, arise*, oh how gladly, like her namesake of Magdala, will she answer, *Rabboni*, and rise in the perfect consummation of bliss, body and soul, to the ministry of Jesus in His glory!

3. *The Master is come, and calleth for thee.* O beloved brethren, it is easy for one who

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has heard and obeyed the voice in life to hear and obey it in the hour of death! I have known this before and ever since I came amongst you; and many are the precious assurances, setting to their seal that God is true to His promises when flesh and heart are failing, which have been given us, as pastor and people, during the last seventeen years. Your thoughts with mine will revert to many an aged pilgrim, many a faithful soldier who was sustaining the burden of life's warfare, many a young and lovely believer whom we in our shortsightedness had thought of as only entering on Christ's service, yes, and many a little child just blossoming into life; who all heard the Master's voice when He came and called them, and all alike calmly and confidingly arose and went.

But though we learn much in the homes of others, especially when admitted, as you have so trustingly admitted me, to the closest

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and most sacred hours of sorrow and of joy, we cannot but learn most in our own homes. And (permit me now to speak especially to the young persons of my flock) dear young friends, never before were these words so impressed on my very soul, as when four months since I was called to break to a beloved child the tidings that love and skill could do no more to arrest the progress of disease, and that we could not hide from ourselves The Master was come, and was calling for her.

Her immediate answer was, "Dear father, I am not afraid to go. How I do thank you for telling me! I am so glad to know all: you must not think that I weep because I fear to die; it is only leaving you all: but Jesus will be there. What should I do without my Saviour now?"

She then asked in the calmest voice, how long it was thought she would live, and spoke of one and another most dear to her; and

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about two hours after she said to her mother, "I feel just like a sailor when he is called to go aloft; he tries all the ropes to see if they are firm. I have been trying them all, and, mother, they are all right."

It seemed to me so like the response of Mary. As soon as she heard the Master had asked for her, she arose quickly and came to Him. We thought then that her time was much nearer than it proved, but the Lord's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. He had many finishing touches to put to His workmanship, and she had to learn more of the meaning of those fathomless words, "the fellowship of His sufferings."

God forbid that I should even attempt to speak of her as an ideal child. She had naturally a very strong will, and a heart brimming over with mirthfulness, and she had her struggles and defeats and victories. I believe she knew the power of prayer

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almost from infancy; and she studied her Bible with care, and wrote hymns with peculiar fluency and gracefulness. But it was not till five years ago, when attending the confirmation of her sister, that the words of Bishop Anderson seemed to seal the work of God's Spirit on her soul.

From that time forth we could not but mark her joyous devotion to the work of Jesus. Her delight in the services of the house of prayer was so great that she used to say, "When once I was in Christ Church I was perfectly happy." She would rise early, so as to secure a whole hour for quiet thought and prayer alone with God. And this was, I doubt not, the fountain-spring of her tender dutifulness in the home circle; of all those warm sympathies with which she entered into the joys and sorrows of others, especially of the poor; of her delight in her Sunday Bible class; of her eager and successful interest in the Children's Church

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Missionary Association; and of that which perhaps strikes us more than any thing else in looking back the last few years—her unselfish appreciation of the character and conduct of others. Though she was so young we often almost unwittingly leaned on her judgment. It was, I think, this which formed so strong a bond of sympathy betwixt her and my beloved fellow-labourer, who reached the home nearly two years sooner than she. He felt that hers was a kindred spirit to his own, and often spoke of his regard for her. And now the wish he so beautifully expressed in the sermon he preached before her confirmation on July 18th, 1869, is accomplished both to him and her:—

"To end well, peacefully, calmly, happily; to have no tormenting fears, no harassing doubts, no sense of guilt on the conscience. To end well, to have the inmost soul lighted up with the lamp of heavenly love, and

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heaven itself beginning to be realized and opening out to our view. No ecstasy of triumph perhaps, though this is granted to some, but a good hope, a firm trust in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and a humble, yet confident committal of the soul to Him. May the Lord vouchsafe us to end well!"

When I returned from America, two years ago, I had the first trembling intimation that the Lord might call us to part from our child; but she herself seems to have had no such impression, as she afterwards assured us, although some lines which she wrote about that time, on her little angel-sister's birthday to glory, have now a touching significance for us.

Are you watching for us, Eva, beside the golden gate?
You shall not watch in vain, darling, there is not long
to wait;
Soon, very soon, by Him we love our summons will
be given,
And we'll come to be with thee, Eva, in Jesus' home
in Heaven.

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But although she had no presentiment of early death, from the hour I told her we must not cherish hopes of life to the very end, I do not think that even the shadow of a cloud crossed her happy faith. I never saw even a tremor of fear, and all her trust was in Jesus and His finished work.

When her Godfather, the Bishop of Ripon, visited her in May, he said, "You always looked happy, Alice;" she replied "Yes, but I am happier now." "Have you no fear whatever?" and she answered, very gently, but very firmly, "None whatever."

In the early part of her illness she said, "I used to be afraid of death, but God has taken it all away. I cannot understand people calling it 'being in danger.' Once my sins seemed to me as a mountain pile, but I have laid them all on Jesus, and His blood is peace. It is all done for me. I have nothing to do but to keep clinging to Jesus till I see Him."

And again, "I used to think much on

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many vexed questions; but standing where I stand, I care only to think of Jesus."

Yet at that time she said, "I wish to live a little longer, and sometimes pray David's prayer: 'O spare me a little that I may renew my strength before I go hence and be no more seen.'" Her prayer was granted. She called the members of her Bible-class into her sick-room one Sunday afternoon, and her parting messages will, we believe, live in the hearts of many of her young friends. She always spoke of death as *going home.* As in a pencil-note which she with difficulty traced to a young companion who had sent to tell her of the serious illness of her little sister, she wrote, "I am going home too, E—— dear, very soon. It is so sweet to think of being with our precious Saviour and never grieving Him any more, though there are so many whom I love to leave behind. Jesus is leading me so gently. I shall often think of your little sister and

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pray that our One Shepherd will guide us both to His home."

Her confirmation had been to her a time of such peculiar blessing that she regarded the confirmation in Christ Church last July with the most intense interest, saying of some of the candidates, "They will soon be among the number of those who are beginning the race, and I among the cloud of witnesses." And again, "I shall not need my confirmation collect long," alluding to the benediction which she was accustomed to turn into a prayer, "Defend, O Lord, me Thy child with Thy heavenly grace, that I may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more until I come to Thy everlasting kingdom."

The Bishop of London paid her a pastoral visit that day, and gave her words of fatherly counsel and blessing, and he most kindly wrote to me last week, "What a demonstration is such a death of the power of God's

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grace and the faithfulness of His promises, and how fully must your hearts, even in their sorrow, have responded to the triumph-cry of the Apostle's faith, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

But as her strength declined, she felt more and more the weariness of weakness and suffering, and longed more and more for the rest of home.

"How strange," she said, "to think of life's warfare nearly over, and I not nineteen; but who would be sorry at the thought of rest for me? *There* will be strength for the work, and work for the strength."

So strongly was this thought graven on her heart that even in her sleep we overheard her saying, "Why will you not let me go home? You know I long to go." And she repeated at another time her favourite lines of the martyr's carol:—

> Be the day weary, or be the day long,
> At length it ringeth to Evensong.

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And again, "Mine has been such a shielded life, but now it is rough. I think I shall want a long time to rest." And again, after a time of much suffering, "Though I cannot say just now the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places, I can say I have a goodly heritage."

And, as the end drew nearer, it was still Christ, all Christ. "What should I do," she asked, "if He were not the Finisher as well as the Author of our faith? I can do nothing now; all is done for me." On the Friday evening before she died she said to me, "Would you put my favourite text on my grave-stone, 'My Beloved is Mine, and I am His,' and that one against my name in the family Bible, 'And so He bringeth them to the haven where they would be;'" and that same evening to her mother, "I could not have had a happier home. If you wish to keep me longer I will try and wish to stay, but I am so unutterably tired."

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The Good Shepherd's time was nearly come. On the Saturday evening we all partook of the Lord's Supper with her, and she said, "I am now only thinking of the four comfortable words; I need not think of any thing else."

This day fortnight was one of much suffering. I had intended to be with you that morning in the house of prayer, but stayed by her at her request; and her face lighted up with a smile of pleasure as I wrote some lines by her side and placed them in her hands, of which one stanza was—

My own bright jewel, dearest;
The graver's tool is keen,
And sharpest seems when nearest
The emerald's perfect sheen;
But in the Prince's casket
All mark its peerless glow,
And none will ever ask it
Why didst thou suffer so?

The day wore through, and the night was peace; and the next morning we knew that it

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could not be very long. We all gathered round her for an hour and a half, while she spoke words of most tender counsel or consolation to each. And when I said to her at last, "Why, my lamb, you have so many to love on earth and so many to love in heaven," she looked at me, and then gazed steadfastly as on One unseen by us, and said very slowly and tenderly, "*Whom have I in heaven but Thee?*" and leaned her head on one side, while a most exquisite expression came over her,—the very smile of heaven. We knelt to commit her in a few words to Jesus; and, as we rose, the quiet gentle breath very gradually became slower and slower, and without the faintest struggle she breathed her happy spirit into the holy keeping of her God.

One word more only, dear friends, I would say of my child. She begged me the day before she died to give you her most grateful anks for all your tender, thoughtful, un-

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wearying love to her, and to us in her, during her long illness. Closely as we were bound before as pastor and people, I feel this has bound us more closely than ever. The Lord return your love in heavenly blessings to you and yours! The Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me!

Suffer me, however, to speak a few closing words to the young of my flock. It was for your sakes especially, dear young friends, I have ventured with a trembling heart and hand to draw aside the veil from the closing weeks of my child's life. What would it be if the Master should come and call for you, perhaps call you to a very gradual decline like hers, from the view of things seen and temporal, to the prospect of things unseen and eternal? Can you answer, I am not afraid to go? Have you cast your sins on Jesus? My child needed all the support of that salvation she had sought and found in days of health.

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The trial of a long illness is very severe, though I believe the glory will be commensurate. Oh, how different it would have been if she had had to seek it first in hours of weakness.

But your summons may come very suddenly. Can you say, I have tried the ropes, and they are all right?

Dear young friends, let me commend to you this day the Saviour of my child. He is willing this day to wash you in His blood, and seal you as His own for ever. He is the chief among ten thousand—the altogether lovely. Oh, accept Him as your Friend in life; and He will be your Friend in death and throughout eternity: for having loved His own that were in the world He loves them to the end. For ourselves, we feel as if a new and indissoluble tie had bound us to that gracious Lord, who has taken the sting from death, and carried our tender and suf-

mb into His blessed fold above.

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But I think no joy on earth to us could compare with that of her death proving life to any of you. Not seldom it is so in the dealings of God with His Church. As it was with Jesus so it often is with His people in this world. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

And oh, *then*, whether the angel comes for you sooner or later, some lines which my child wrote on the death of that holy sufferer, Charlotte Kemble, last summer, will be fulfilled in you, as we feel they were fulfilled in her who wrote them:—

> And now her gentle ministries are o'er:
> The message came for her, and fearlessly
> She answer'd to its summons, Here am I.
> She was "so happy," for the Lord she loved
> Had heard her prayer and granted her request,
> And "gently, gently, gently led her home."
> Safe, safe for ever now; no weary days
> Or sleepless nights of pain, no night is there.
> Another radiant form in white array'd,

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Another brow to wear the victor's crown,
Another hand to strike the golden harp,
Another voice to raise the triumph-song,—
We may not weep for her, we can but join
The angels' song of praise, Safe home, safe home.

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POSTSCRIPT.

IN obedience to the reasons stated in the Introduction, I proceed to offer to the younger members of my flock a few additional memorials of my child.

She was born at Hinton Martell Rectory, Dorset, on August 16, 1853, an anniversary already sacred in my family, for it was the birthday of my fondly-loved suffering sister Fanny, who had entered into her Saviour's rest twelve months before. Alice bore her name, and in many ways reflected her character. But as I was called to my present ministerial charge in the summer of 1855, all

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my child's recollections and associations from her early infancy were interwoven with Hampstead. And her love for her home and all the interests clustering round our vicarage was intensely strong, and seemed to grow stronger every year of her happy and joyous life.

As a child she was vigorous in body and in mind. I remember when many of us climbed Helvellyn in 1862, Alice headed the party most of the way, to the great delight of our guide, who called her his mountain-goat, and she was the first to reach the summit. And at this time, when about nine years of age, she would write really beautiful hymns, the hymns of a child of course, but such as gave promise of a singular felicity in composition. No study, when she bent her mind to it, was ever a trouble to her. In after years she took especial interest in modern languages, and was able to find real pleasure in her Greek Testament. But her will as a

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child was impulsive and sometimes wayward, and this gave rise to many battles with herself, in which she was by no means always the victor. Her spirits too were exuberantly buoyant; she would not seldom keep the whole circle amused by her sallies of genuine and irrepressible drollery. This natural hilarity of heart, in itself a most precious gift, to be carefully treasured for the after claims of life, seems almost of necessity to involve tears as well as laughter. And Alice said to me she sometimes despaired of self-conquest. She knew, however, in her own experience, the power of prayer; she faithfully read her daily portions of Scripture; and the Blessed Spirit of God was graciously, and often successfully, striving with her.

It was not, however, till her sister's confirmation, in 1867, when a most touching charge was delivered to the candidates by Dr. Anderson, formerly Bishop of Rupert's Land, that Alice seems to have surrendered

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the citadel of her heart for ever to her Lord. From that time there was no indecision, no faltering, no half-heartedness. She gave herself to Him who had given Himself for her ; and she threw herself into His service so earnestly, and yet so quietly and unobtrusively, that by degrees she gained that indescribable influence over others, which nothing but humble consistency acquires. And when two years after this she was herself confirmed, and admitted to the Supper of the Lord, we could not but observe how rapidly she grew in grace and in the knowledge of her Saviour.

That autumn she accompanied us to Switzerland. How little we then thought that the beauties which she so keenly enjoyed were to fill her mind with lovely and abiding thoughts and images in many a weary hour of painfulness and watching. When I left my home to visit America for a few weeks in the autumn of 1870 we none of

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us had the least suspicion of her being subject to any delicacy of chest. During my absence the first symptoms showed themselves, which awakened anxiety; but so imperceptibly gradual was the progress of disease that again and again, even till last April, we cherished the hope that the Great Husbandman was only pruning the fruitful bough that it might bring forth more fruit. His thoughts were not our thoughts. He had need of her in His paradise of rest.

I ventured in my Sermon to quote the last stanza of some lines she wrote on the anniversary of the death of her little sister Eva Mabel, a lovely infant of a few months old, who had been taken from us after little more than a day's illness some years previously. Though there are many home allusions in this little poem, I transcribe it just as it stands in a manuscript book of hers, which she gave me a few weeks before she died,

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containing her own verses and extracts from her favourite authors :—

SEVEN YEARS AGO.

AND can it be seven years have pass'd, seven long years to-day,
Since Jesus called a little child from our bright home away?
Since, in the dark chill autumn night, He bade the angels come,
And take our little Eva to His own fair heavenly home.

She had come to us in early spring, when birds and flowers were gay,
And all the happy summer months she was as bright as they ;
But when the summer flowers were gone, and autumn leaflets fell,
Our little blossom faded, the one we loved so well.

There was a shadow on our home, those sad and solemn days,
The children hush'd their voices, and still'd their merry plays ;
For in the quiet nursery, where she was wont to be,
Whose walls had often echoed to her voice of baby glee,

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She, like a little fading flower, was lying calm and still,
Her sweet blue eyes were closing, and her dimpled hands were chill;
Then in the night the Master came, and from among the flowers,
He came to gather lilies—that night He gather'd ours.

And when the morning broke they came and told us she was gone,
And oh, it seem'd so hard at first to say, "Thy will be done;"
There was the little cradle-bed, there was the empty chair,
But the little one we loved so well, she was no longer there.

We gather'd round her where she lay, but oh, we could not weep,
It seem'd as if the angels' hands had folded her to sleep;
Her own sweet smile upon her lips, which death could ne'er remove,
Seem'd, as we knelt around her, to whisper, "God is Love."

'Twas with the first spring snowdrops that we had hail'd her birth,
Meet welcome for the purest flower that ever bloom'd on earth;

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And ere within the quiet tomb they laid her down to rest,
We gather'd autumn violets to lay upon her breast.

And now seven years have come and gone, since Jesus call'd thee home,
And other precious little ones to claim our love have come;
But ever in our hearts, Eva, a place for thee is given,
For our little angel-sister, in Jesus' home in Heaven.

Are you watching for us, Eva, beside the golden gate?
You shall not watch in vain, darling, there is not long to wait;
Soon, very soon, by Him we love, our summons will be given,
And we'll come to be with thee, Eva, in Jesus' home in Heaven.

November 2, 1870.

I also mentioned her tender sympathy with the poor in their sorrows. Of this sympathy the verses below, written on the death of a little child whom she constantly visited through a long illness, will give an example:—

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LITTLE MARY.

Do not weep for little Mary,
She is safe in Heaven above;
Folded close to Jesus' bosom,
Nestling in His arms of love.

Do not weep, for she hath tarried
Long on earth in grief and pain,
Jesus wanted her in Heaven,
Would ye call her back again?

Do not weep—though lone and dreary
Is your home on earth below?
She will never suffer hunger,
Toil and care will never know.

Oh, she looks so pure and peaceful,
In her little coffin-bed;
With the snowdrops on her bosom,
And the violets round her head.

Do not weep for little Mary,
Dry your eyes with tears so dim;
Jesus wanted her in Heaven,
Suffer her to go to Him.

January, 1869.

And the poem that follows on the home-call of a tradesman's child, whom her mother

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fondly called her "little comforter," for she was the sunbeam of her sick-room—proved, I know, the very balm of Gilead to the stricken heart for which they were penned :—

MY LITTLE COMFORTER.

I MAY not guard my darling's sleep,
Beside her bed to-night,
Only the stars o'er her shall keep
Their watch till dawn of light ;
But in the land of endless day,
The land where she is gone,
They never need nor sun nor star,
For God is Light alone.

The little pattering feet which made
Such music for me here,
I know are by the angels led
By streams of water clear.
I know that to my darling's hands
A harp of gold is given,
And that the voice now hush'd for me,
Has learnt the songs of Heaven.

But oh, the silence in our home,
The weary aching pain,
The longing that we may not quell,
To call her back again ;

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One Hand of love can dry our tears,
One pierced Hand alone,
One only Voice can bid us say,
"Father, Thy will be done."

Oh no, I would not bring her back
To this poor world below,
I know Whose voice has call'd her home,
And I will let her go.
For many a storm of grief may rise
To cloud our heavenward way,
But in her home so passing fair,
All tears are wiped away.

And when my time of tears is o'er,
My weary journey done,
When in the land where crowns are given
My cross I shall lay down,
When through the golden gates of Heaven
The angel songs I hear,
My little comforter shall be
The first to greet me there.

January 20th, 1872.

My kind readers will also, I think, be glad to possess the whole of her simple and touching memorial to Charlotte Kemble, of which

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in my Sermon I quoted only the closing lines :—

"SAFE HOME TO-NIGHT."

"GONE home to-night ;" how many an evening hour
Has found her laid upon her weary couch,
And heard her feeble voice in earnest prayer,
And words of praise uplifted. Now that voice
Is hush'd on earth for ever, and her home,
That lowly cottage room, is empty now,
Save for the still pale form in death's calm sleep
Reposing. She was one whom Jesus loved ;
His hand outstretch'd to her the cup of pain,
And she could meekly say, "Thy will be done."
So day by day and year by year had pass'd,
And found her still a patient sufferer
Known but to few, yet by those few beloved
And trusted as a faithful friend, whose heart
Was ever open to their joys and cares.
How often have we run to her to tell
Of some new joy sent from our Father's hand,
And seen the beaming smile which lighted up
That pale worn face ; or if some sorrow came,
How ready was her loving sympathy ;
And though her hand was powerless to aid,
We knew how fervent were the prayers which rose
From that low couch for comfort and for help.
And now her gentle ministries are o'er.

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The message came for her, and fearlessly
She answer'd to its summons, "Here am I."
She was "so happy," for the Lord she loved
Had heard her prayer and granted her request,
And "gently, gently, gently led her home."
Safe, safe, for ever now; no weary days,
Or sleepless nights of pain, no night is there;
Another radiant form in white array'd,
Another brow to wear the victor's crown,
Another hand to strike the golden harp,
Another voice to raise the triumph-song;
We may not weep for her, we can but join
The angels' song of praise, "Safe home to-night."

July 7th, 1871.

This blessed saint of God, to whom the above lines refer, was confined to her chamber and couch of suffering for twenty years. The words "so happy," and the thrice-repeated "He is leading me *gently, gently, gently* home," were the last she spoke to me very shortly before she breathed her last. She dearly loved my child. There was a secret affinity betwixt them on earth, and now they have met in the presence of the Lord they

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both so ardently loved. They are both "safe home."

The remaining three pieces which I have selected have already appeared in print; the first in the *Sunday at Home* for November, 1871:—

"BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR, AND KNOCK."

"WHAT sound is that as of one knocking gently?
Yet who would enter here at hour so late?
Arise, draw back the bolt, unclose the portal:
What figure standeth there before the gate?

Is it thy King? oh stay and gaze a moment;
No sign of royalty that King adorns,
He beareth but a shepherd's staff and lantern,
And yet He hath a crown—a crown of thorns.

It is thy King—it is thy Lord, thy Master,
Oh lead Him in beneath the open door:
'Tis true thou art not worthy He should enter;
Yet dost thou love Him, and He asks no more.

What can we set before Him, rich and costly?
Yet oh, for such a Guest, what can be meet?
Nay, He had rather thou shouldst sit and listen,
As Mary sat, beneath His sacred Feet.

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Yes, listen to His words: they are so tender;
They will not chide thee; all they breathe is love;
He tells thee of the "place prepared" in Heaven,
The "many mansions" in the home above.

He tells thee how His watchful eye hath seen thee,
When sorely tempted in thy daily life;
How He hath mark'd the tried and toilworn soldier,
Bearing his banner in the thickest strife.

He bears to thee sweet messages from Heaven,
Whispers of love from dear ones folded there;
And tells thee that a place for thee is waiting,
That thou shalt join them in their home so fair.

And ere He rise to go, He softly whispers,
"Child of My love, thou art for ever Mine;
My child, My own, My ransom'd one, My jewel,
Within My crown of glory thou shalt shine.

"I leave thee now, yet am I ever with thee,
Here must thou walk by faith, thy love to prove;
Soon shalt thou lie upon thy Father's bosom,
And rest within the sunshine of His love."

The next appeared in the *Church of England Sunday School Magazine* of last April, and seemed, from the grateful testimonies

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which reached me to touch a chord of sympatny in many hearts:—

HE comes to me in the morning,
When I wake to His love anew,
And His words are sweet as the honey
And pure as the early dew:
He lays His hand upon me,
And I kneel at His feet, and pray
That in His holy keeping
I may pass the coming day.

He comes to me at noonday,
When the morning's peace has flown,
When the voices of earth discordant
Seem to rule my heart alone:
He lays His hand upon me,
And bids me be still awhile,
Till the peace has all come back again
In the sunshine of His smile.

He comes to me in the evening,
The peaceful twilight hour,
And His words have a thrilling sweetness,
A strange and tender power:
He lays His hand upon me
And whispers of sin forgiven,
And the light that comes at evening
Shines on me then from Heaven.

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He comes to me through the darkness,
In the solemn hours of night,
And the room is fill'd with His presence,
A soft and radiant light :
He lays His hand upon me,
And I rest in His embrace,
Till the light of dawn awakes me
Again to seek His face.

* * * * *

He came to me in life's morning,
When my heart was fresh and young,
When I burn'd to enter the battle
With the weapons I deem'd so strong :
He laid His hand upon me,
And I knelt at His feet in prayer,
And yielded my heart for ever
To His strong and tender care.

He will come to me in life's noontide,
When the burdens seem hard to bear,
When the home seems dim and distant
And my heart is bow'd with care :
He will lay His hand upon me,
And lead me along the way,
Till the burden of care is lighten'd
And the sorrow is pass'd away.

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He will come to me in life's evening,
When my journey is almost o'er;
When I stand by the river waiting
To pass to the further shore:
He will lay His hand upon me,
And point o'er the hurrying tide,
Then His arms of love will bear me
Across to the other side.

He will come to me through the darkness,
In the chamber of the tomb,
And the light of His Holy Presence
Shall chase away its gloom:
He will lay His hand upon me,
In a clasp which none can sever,
Till Heaven's own dawn shall wake me
To see His face for ever.

January 30th, 1872.

And the last was given in *Evening Hours*, in the July number of this year,—

"ART thou so weary of the road,
Child of My love?
Is the hard test I sent too hard
Thy strength to prove?

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Draw near to Me, My child, and share
With Me thy grief;
And in My Spirit's sympathy
Find sweet relief."

"It has not all been wearisome,
Master Divine,
For Thou hast never left Thy child
Alone to pine;
Yet my cross is heavy oftentimes,
And hard to bear:
And the glimpses of Thy presence seem
So few and rare.

"I know 'twas love that sent it me,
Divinest Lord;
Not for one moment would Thy child
Distrust Thy word.
But oh, sometimes in weariness
My heart will ask,
Why one who is so weak must learn
So hard a task?

"Before Thou sentest me this cross
To bear for Thee,
The narrow road seem'd broad and fair
And smooth to me:

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Each wayside flower I stoop'd to pluck,
Seem'd passing fair;
And tokens of Thy watchful love
Were every where.

"Thou wouldst so often bid me stay
Awhile to hear
Sweet words of love and tenderness,
My heart to cheer.
And now beneath my cross I bend;
I may not stay,
But constantly and wearily
Press on my way.

"I miss Thy words of love, my Lord,
So passing sweet,
When Thou wouldst bid me rest awhile
Beneath Thy feet.
I am too weak to walk alone,—
O, tell me why
So many precious things and true
Thou dost deny?—"

"Art thou so weak, child of My love?
Then art thou strong:
For this have I withdrawn Myself
From thee so long,—

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That thou might'st learn to find thy strength
Alone in Me,
And as in sunshine, so in shade
Serene to be.

"I only waited for this hour,
My grace to show;
Thou canst not bear thy cross alone,
Full well I know.
But see, Mine arm I round thee cast:
So shalt thou prove
How ready and how strong to save;
How free My love.

"Thus in the shelter of Mine arms,
Henceforward rest.
None ever faint with weariness,
Upon My breast.
Is not thy cross already shorn
Of half its grief,
Since thou hast but to lean on Me
To find relief?

"Is not My smile enough to cheer
Thy longest day?
More sweet than all the fading flowers
Beside the way.

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And in thy home and Mine, My child,
Thy journey done,
The hand that bore for thee thy cross,
Shall give thy crown."

When she wrote these little poems she had no presentiment of early death; yet many of the thoughts seem to us now strangely prophetic, and the music of her words fraught with peculiar consolation.

But this sweet singer was not permitted longer to touch the strings. Even her light frail harp became too heavy for her feeble strength. She could only lie at heaven's golden gate and wait for the Master's summons. During our Church Mission week she partook of the Holy Communion in Christ Church on Monday morning, March 18; but it was the last time she was able to enter that house of prayer, which was so inexpressibly dear to her. The London physician, whom her kind and watchful medical friend wished us to consult, advised the southern coast for the spring

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months, and by his advice we selected Bournemouth, where she greatly enjoyed the pastoral ministrations of the Rev. P. F. Eliot, the vicar of Trinity Church, and also those of my father's beloved friend, Dr. McNeile, the Dean of Ripon.

But the spring proved most ungenial. She grew decidedly weaker day by day, until I received an intimation from the physician there, under whose care she was placed, that if I hoped to remove her home the journey must be undertaken at once. In answer to many prayers strength was given for the dreaded day of travel.

After her return the most beautiful summer weather broke upon us suddenly; and when she had somewhat recovered from the fatigue and suffering of the journey, I felt that it would not be right to conceal our fears from her any longer. I was reading with her day by day the Epistle to the Philippians, and the words of St. Paul, which we were speak-

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ing of together, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain: for if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better," enabled me to break it to her. Never, never can I forget the calm composure for herself, and the tender grief for us which marked that hour. All restraint was now past, and we seemed to talk as on the very border-land of heaven, with the soft calm light of another world shining upon our hearts.

That I might the more easily recall some of her gentle expressions of voice and look on that evening, and during the next few days, I tried to interweave them, though very imperfectly, in the following fragmentary lines:—

The chilling East had shifted to the South,
South with a dash of West. The heavy rains

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Were over, and the storms of sleet and snow
That had so often grieved the tender Spring
Were chased. The healing sunshine shed its balm
On field and forest, and sweet garden nooks,
Where rhododendrons leapt into the light;
And summer so long coy smiled "yes" at last.
None had recall'd the wintry winds and frosts,
But that their mission was not to the flowers,
Nor shelter'd violets, nor torn leaves alone:
They bruised a blossom summer could not heal.

She lay a fading flower upon her couch;
Dear lamb, the tenderest of our tender flock;
Blithe spirit, the sunniest of our sunny group;
And it was mine to tell her hope had died
In our sad hearts, the hope of her young life;
That skill and watchful love could do no more
But tend the embers smouldering on the hearth.
The words clung to my trembling lips; but she,
When I had told her through quick brimming tears,
And broken whispers, look'd on me and said,
"Dear father, I am not afraid to go;
I thank you, how I thank you telling me.
I am so glad to know it. If I weep,
Father, it is not that I fear to die,
'Tis only leaving all I love behind;
But Jesus will be with me. He is there,
And Constance too, and Eva . . . . All is well;

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How long, dear father, think they I shall live?
What should I do without my Saviour now?"

That evening when two hours had pass'd or more,
Leaning upon her mother's breast she said,
"Since father told me I must die, I feel
Just like a sailor call'd to go aloft,
Who, ere he plants his footsteps on the shrouds,
Tries every rope to see if they are firm;
And, mother dearest, they are right, all right."

May 21st.

A few days after this she asked her mother, with the most natural and childish simplicity,—

"Sweet mother, is mirth wrong when death is near?
Not quite, quite near, but just now as I am?
At times I feel so merry; and I think
It helps me then to utter all my heart.
You know I have been always frolicsome:
Somehow the valley does not seem to chill
The laughter of my lips. But is it wrong?"
"My joyous birdie, sing your blithesome notes.
A merry heart is one of God's best gifts;
And Jesus says, There will be mirth in heaven."

And it was about this time (for I see my lines bear the date May 28) that she said to

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me: we had been speaking of the love of Jesus, and I had asked her,—

"And think you that it helps to quicken love,
Darling, to know the interval is brief
Before you see the Saviour face to face?"
"Yes, father; when I think that I shall go
Alone with Him into that other world,
He only with me in the vale of death,
And passing through the river only He;
The Shepherd with the lamb upon His bosom.
Sometimes a sudden thrill of gladness shoots
Quite through me when I think of seeing Him;
But, father dear, it is not always so;
More often the calm peace of trusting Him,
The sense of pressure of His arms, while I
Can only answer, Saviour, hold me fast."

We had thought that her time might be very short; but the joy of home, and the warmth of summer, and the tender thoughtfulness of friends, which provided her with every luxury and comfort love could devise, almost seemed to woo her back to life. Her room was bright with the choicest flowers, and her sofa-table replenished with the costliest

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fruits; and she would pick out on the harmonicon, the only instrument she now had strength to play, some of her favourite airs. Few who saw her during the next four or five weeks will forget the tranquil untroubled gaze which she bent on those she loved, or that "far away" look, which a young artist companion has stereotyped for us, and which seemed at times to be fixed on things unseen and eternal. I tried to express it in the following lines :—

On her couch she lay and ponder'd
Many a bygone day ;
And her wingèd thoughts they wander'd
Far away ;

Far away along the ranges
Of her joyous past,
Joyous and with seldom changes
Overcast :

All her babyhood's sweet laughter,
Rosy childhood's song,
And the struggles that came after,
Right with wrong :

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Till she laid her every burden
At her Saviour's Cross,
Finding in His passion's guerdon
Gain for loss.

Still her dreams the past unravel :
Still her musings roam ;
Seaside rambles, foreign travel,
Welcomes home ;

Winter with its bright employments,
Merry fireside hours ;
Summer with its fresh enjoyments,
Fruits and flowers :

On and on, until a shadow
(Was it light or shade?)
Fell across the cowslip meadow
Where she play'd ;

And a voice with life's quick story
Mingling seem'd to say,
"Jesus needs thee in His glory
Far away."

Among other pieces she had copied into her manuscript book that striking poem by Edmonston,—

Which is the happiest death to die?

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and she said her wish was expressed in the words,—

O, said one, if I might choose,
Long at the gates of bliss would I lie,
And feast my spirit, ere it fly,
With bright celestial views.
Mine were a lingering death without pain,
A death which all might love to see,
And mark how sweet and bright should be
The victory I should gain.

For some weeks it seemed as if her wish for "a lingering death without pain" were to be granted her; but the weakness and the weariness perceptibly increased during July and August, and occasional attacks of pleurisy taught her and us more than we knew before, what it is to suffer with Jesus. It was at this time she said, "If you see a flock of sheep going along the road, and one of them is very weary, you would not like them to go on driving it, but would wish to see the Shepherd take it in his arms to the fold." This thought it was which gave her

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such peculiar delight in an engraving, sent her by a friend, of that beautiful picture of "The Good Shepherd," with a lamb in His arms, by Mr. Dobson. She begged that it might be hung where she could constantly see it, and left it to her brother, saying she was sure it would help him, when he should be called to minister to the lambs of Christ's flock.

She suffered much at this time from feverish heat in the hands and feet, and touchingly said to us "she did not think her feet would be cool again till she passed through the waters of Jordan."

Her birthday, August 16th, was one of very mingled feelings to us, but she was very calm and happy, and rested on the birthday text I chose for her, "He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever." The tarrying the Lord's leisure indeed seemed long to her, and the words "so tired" would sometimes escape

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her lips; but as we entered on the second week in September, so heavenly was her gentleness that we could not help saying one to another, "Surely patience has had its perfect work in our sweet sufferer." And so it was. On the tenth of that month her strength began rapidly to sink, and her quick breath became quicker and feebler day by day. She more than once referred with pleasure to some lines I had written for my own suffering sister Fanny, twenty-five years before.

"And so He bringeth them to the haven where they would be."

Yes, billow after billow—see they come
Faster and rougher, as her little boat
Nears evermore the haven. Oftentimes
It seems to sink and fall adown the wave,
As if borne backward by the struggling tide;
Yet mounting billow after billow, wave
On wave o'er-riding, tempest-tost and shatter'd,
Still, still it nears the haven evermore.
"Poor mariner, art thou not sadly weary?"
Dear brother, rest is sweeter after toil.

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"Grows not thine eye confused and dim with sight
Of nothing but the wintry waters?" True,
But then my pole-star, constant and serene,
Above the changing waters changes not.
"But what if clouds as often veil the sky?"
Oh, then, an unseen hand hath ever ta'en
The rudder from my feeble hands the while—
And I cling to it. "Answer me once more,
Mariner, what think'st thou when the waters bear
Thy frail boat backward from the long'd for harbour?"
Oh, brother, though innumerable waves
Still seem to rise betwixt me and my home—
Still billow after billow, wave on wave—
I know that they are number'd: not one less
Should bear me homeward if I had my will:
For One who knows what tempests are to weather,
O'er whom there broke the wildest billows once,
He bids these waters swell. In His good time
The last rough wave shall bear me on its bosom
Into the haven of eternal peace.
No billows after—they *are* number'd, brother.
"Oh, gentle mariner, steer on, steer on:
My tears shall flow for thee, but they are tears
In which faith strives with grief and overcomes."

Alice would look up and say brightly, "They are numbered," leaving us to supply

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the rest. And when her sister grieved over her suffering, she said, "Why are you sorry? I am not. You know this is what we have been looking for, and there will be no sin there, no temptation." And again, "I do so love to think of seeing my Saviour soon, for it will be so sweet to be able to fall down at His feet and tell Him how sorry I am to have grieved Him so often."

On Saturday, the 14th, as her mother and I were by her side, she said, "I am quite happy. It is strange to be going where you can none of you come with me, but *He* is there, and that is enough." And at this time she seemed to have the touching impression that she was losing her mother, rather than her mother losing her, saying to our faithful nurse, "You know what it is to lose your mother."

On Sunday morning her sufferings from cough and breathlessness were very severe. I had meant to be with my flock in the Lord's

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house, praying for her, but when I went into her room she said, "Dearest father, I am so glad you are here, for the pain is always better when I can see you." So her mother and I both stayed with her, and as I sate by her side, and watched the sufferings I was so powerless to relieve, I wrote the following verses, and placed them in her hand:—

My lamb, thy path is thorny
And ruggedest at last;
The close of thy short journey
With storms is overcast:
But thy Shepherd's arms enfold thee,
His arms of love and power,
And He will ever hold thee
From weary hour to hour.

My pretty one, my blossom,
More loved than words can say,
Upon thy parents' bosom
Thou couldst but fade away:
So weeping we resign thee
And lay our treasure down,
For Jesus would entwine thee
In His unfading crown.

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My own bright jewel, dearest,
The graver's tool is keen,
And sharpest seems, when nearest
The emerald's perfect sheen;
But in the Prince's casket,
All mark its peerless glow,
And none will ever ask it,
"Why didst thou suffer so?"

But yet to see thee suffer,
Seems harder evermore;
And the last few waves are rougher
Than all that broke before:
And still the gusts more thickly
Drive on the blinding foam:
Come quickly, Lord, come quickly,
And take our darling home.

These were the last verses she read, though she referred with much pleasure that day to a very favourite stanza of hers from that choice little volume "The Name of Jesus:"—

The trumpet note of welcome,
Is always on the blast,
It has no time to die away,
The souls come in so fast;

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Then faint not, ye beloved,
But let hope conquer sorrow,
Those golden gates shall open
To let you in to-morrow.

And in the afternoon she meditated upon some parts of the 91st Psalm, which I pointed out to her, especially that promise, "He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings thou shalt trust." I did not know then that it was a Psalm which she had been accustomed to repeat every night for many years before going to sleep.

I have mentioned in the Sermon how calm and unbroken was the peace of her passage through the river on the following morning. Among her parting messages was one of grateful thanks sent to two faithful servants, who had been with us from her infancy, and whose tender ministries had so often alleviated her long illness. She said, "Tell them I can never thank them enough for all they have done for me." The beloved one

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on earth, whom our child named last, was her aged grandfather, Sir Samuel Bignold, to whom she was most tenderly attached. One other incident of that morning I may mention: she begged us to turn over the leaf of her roll of daily texts, and her eye kindled with pleasure as she saw the words, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand," and again on the same sheet, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me." In little more than an hour from that time the day for her had broken, and the Master had come.

She was laid to rest in the beautiful churchyard of Watton, Herts, in the same grave where her little sisters Constance and Eva lie, close by that of my father and mother and sister. The sun shone brightly on the tints of early autumn, and a little bird warbled its sweetest song as we gathered round her open grave. The service was read with the deepest tenderness and sympathy by the

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Rector of Watton. Many of the old parishioners gathered round, who had known me in the days of my boyhood. The same kind friend played the sweet-toned organ who had played it during the days of my father's pastorate, and the village choir sang Bishop Heber's plaintive and consoling funeral hymn, and every heart vibrated to its closing verse,—

Thou art gone to the grave ; but we will not deplore thee,
Whose God was thy ransom, thy guardian, thy guide ;
He gave thee, He took thee, and He will restore thee,
And death has no sting, for the Saviour has died.

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[Eight weeks after the death of Alice, her fondly loved infant sister and Godchild Irene, aged eighteen months, fell asleep, 12th November, 1872.]

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THE DARK LIGHT.

"*And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark.*"—ZECH. xiv. 6.

HAPLY it was a dream of Paradise,
A human thought of things all too Divine
For human language;—haply something more
Than a mere dream, for such like things must be.
But, as it chanced, while winter sobb'd and sigh'd
Among the leafless trees, and bleak rains beat
The latest jasmine blossoms down in wrath,
I sat and mused within my darken'd home,—
Twice darken'd, and within so short a time.

I call it dark, and yet I hardly know
Whether it were most dark or luminous.
'Tis true the Master yesternight had come
And taken in His own strong Hand the lamp,
The little silver lamp last lighted there,
And borne it with such matchless tenderness
The small flame scarcely flicker'd to His tread,
Yet borne it from us to His Glory-Home.

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But as He enter'd, surely of design,
He left the beautiful gates of pearl unlatch'd,
And through the slender narrowing crevices
Such glints of heaven-light (there they have no sun,
Or I had call'd it sunlight) found their way,
And struggling fell upon our desolate home,
It was not wholly dark,—part dark, part light.

Well, musing there (call it a dream or trance),
I thought my spirit pass'd within those doors,
And felt a strange enlargement wandering
In solitary bliss until I came
Upon a nook, shaded with trees of life.
A shelter'd home-like nook, where she, whose hands
I and her mother held two moons ago
The while she stepp'd into the river waves,
Sate all alone. Yes, only two full moons,
As we count time, had waned and wax'd since then;
But words may never tell the dignity,
The calm majestical aspect of power,
The power of perfect sinless holiness
Attemper'd with the grace of perfect love,
That little term of converse with her Lord
And with the blessed ones who sleep in Him
Had written on her brow. List! as I gazed
Spell-bound, a parent raptured with his child,
She look'd up eagerly (oh, not on me,

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I was a mortal spirit, and had not borne
The level glance of immortality),
But well I knew that bright and joyous gaze,
For I had often seen it as she sang
The sweet songs of her pilgrimage, or knelt
Awaiting at the table of her Lord
The seals and pledges of His dying love.
I thought the Master must be very near :
And so it was; albeit I saw Him not,
But only heard the whispers of His voice
Like music on the mountains. And He said,
"My child, I have a glad surprise this hour
In store for thee: an added joy to heaven."

"Dear Master," she replied, "my cup is full
And brimming over. Can I bear more joy?"

"Yes, in My strength, My child."

"What is it, Lord?"

"Thy infant sister has come home from home."

Joy, grief, love, trust, all blended in her tones,
Only the grief was mantled with the joy
Even as He wiped the tear-drops ere they fell.
"Dear Lord, Thou wilt be doubly near to them ;
Nearer than ever, nearest to my mother;

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What otherwise, dear Master, would she do
Without her babe, her little comforter,
The only one whose merriment of life
Was never shadow'd with a shade of sorrow ?
My cup, my crystal cup of joy was full,
My mother's dash'd with tears. I love to think
How very near Thou must intend to be
To her and to my father and to all,
Ere Thou would'st take this treasure from their clasp."

"I ask'd them, and they gave their nursling, ask'd
The mother, and she gave Me back her babe.
I have been with them; they are comforted;
I will be with them still."

And as He spoke
The Good and Gentle Shepherd smiled, and took
The little tender ewe-lamb from His bosom
And gave it to her, saying,

"Didst not thou
Place at the font this lamb within My arms,
In My own covenant of changeless grace?
My child, I have been faithful to thy trust:
I fed her, clothed her, cradled her in love,
A father's, mother's, brother's, sister's love,
The love of nurse and servants, kith and friends, —
I watch'd her through her little life on earth,

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And shelter'd her from every wind that blew,
Until My time was come—and then I slipp'd
The painless arrow into her young heart,
And bore her through the shallows of the Jordan,
And brought her hither to thee. She is thine:
Be sponsor to her here."

The voice was still.
I look'd, I saw the sister take her charge;
Yes, I could meet my baby's fearless eye
Of innocent delight and wondering bliss,
For it was glory in the bud not bloom:
The pure and lofty forehead made for thought,
The rounded cheek for love and laughter made
The eye that sparkled, "Will I? Yes, I will."
The arch lips tremulous with eagerness,
The little hands outstretch'd in trustfulness,
The little feet that danced for mirthfulness,
The whole babe ready for a spring of love—
I saw, but cannot tell how all this wore
The garb of Paradise. I only know
It was so. Yes, Irene was in heaven.

I tried to speak, but could not. List! and look,
Two other little lambs came pressing now

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Close nestling to their elder sister's side.
But I could bear no more. I woke and found
Myself alone within my darken'd home,
Darken'd, and yet it was more light than dark.

E. H. B.

Nov. 13, 1872.

THE END.

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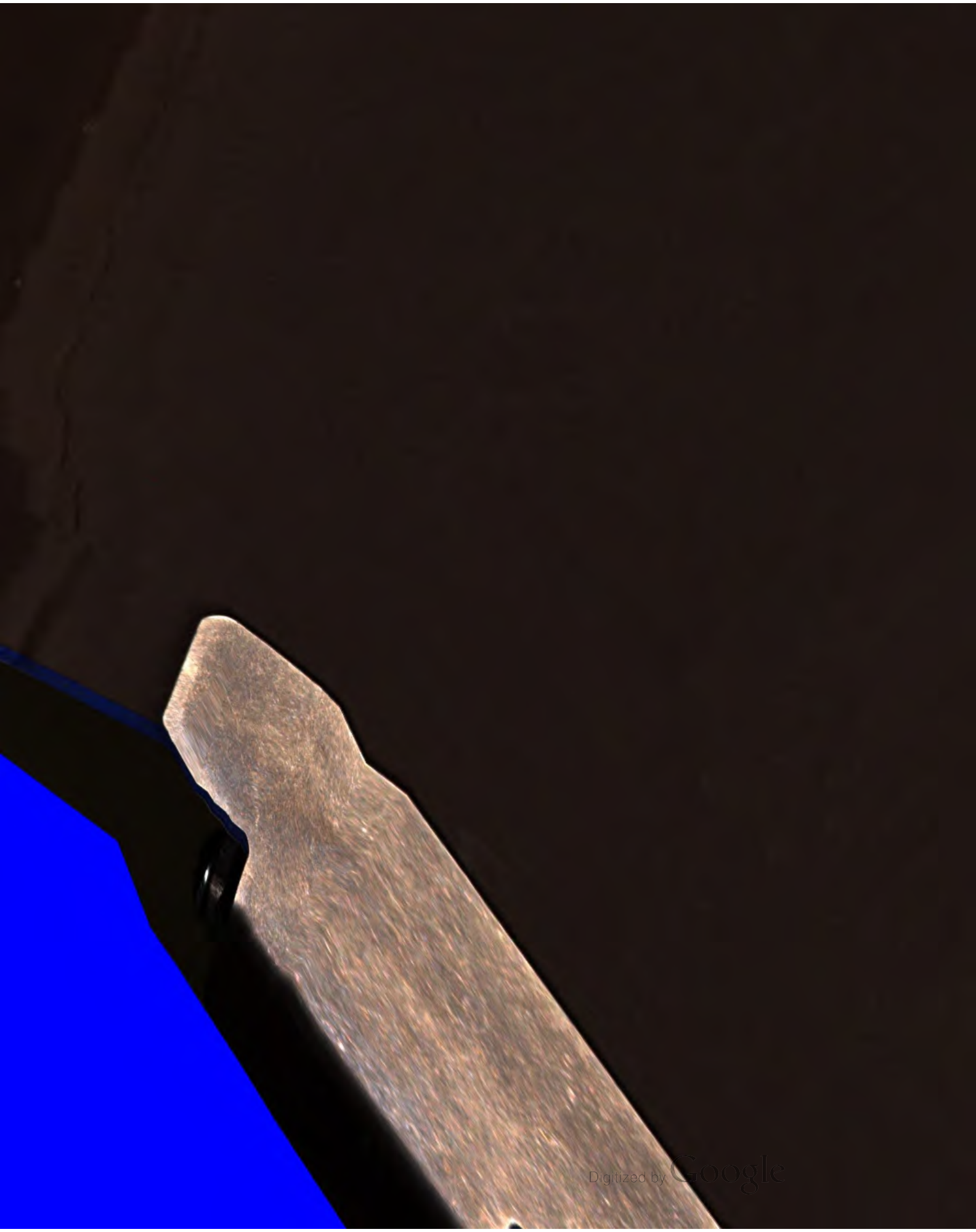
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